



The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

● JULY-AUGUST 1995

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JULY-AUGUST 1995

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LAY WOMEN

If I have hardly mentioned lay women it is because 'laymen' must always include lay women. Lay women are not very much in evidence in the Councils of the Church, chiefly because of the selfishness and the self-assertiveness of the Indian Christian male, but it does not mean that they do not count in real Christian service. In fact, one of the most hopeful sign is the work among women for which we must thank those devoted persons, Our Women Missionaries, and their Indian Colleagues, who seem to work in such close co-operation and harmony; they cannot however, accomplish their work without the kindly guidance, the whole-hearted assistance and the enthusiastic co-operation of parochial clergy and their paid colleagues, But much remains to be done, particularly of developing voluntary leadership among Indian Women.

—Churchman 1957

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A Mission Theology for Tomorrow

BY J. RUSSELL CHANDRAN, *Bangalore*

Introduction

In order to be faithful to the calling of the Church it is important that churches in different situations take time periodically to rethink the meaning and practice of Christian Mission. As we are approaching the end of a century and nearing the entry into the 21st century it is only proper that we take a fresh look at the Mission commitment of the Church of South India. It is, therefore, very laudable that the CSI Council for Mission and Evangelism has arranged this consultation.

What the mission of the Church is cannot be formulated once for all, for all time and for all places. We believe in a living God who responds to the changing situations to fulfil his purposes. We know what the mission is only by discerning what God's mission is that expresses his love.

For discerning God's mission today we have several aids, the testimonies in the Bible, the history of the Church's involvement in mission through the centuries, and the insights which have emerged through the modern ecumenical movement.

For discerning the frontiers of mission we also need to grasp the realities confronting the Church today, socio-political, religious, cultural and spiritual. It is the context in which the Church is placed that determines the mission to be accomplished.

Biblical Perspectives for Mission

In the Biblical testimonies to God's mission there are many important insights about the meaning and methodology of mission. Let me draw attention to a few of those insights:

1. The Exodus vision. This is a story of the liberation of the people from oppression. 2. The gathering of the people of Israel. It has been pointed out by Biblical scholars like Norman Gottwald that the people were united not on the basis of ethnic, religious or linguistic identity but on the basis of their socio-political struggle for human dignity. The prophetic affirmation in Amos 9:7-8 means that God's solidarity is always and everywhere with the

oppressed people for their re-humanization. 3. The Jubilee year concept in Lev. 25. This reflects the impact of the teaching of the great prophets. The 'Year of the Lord's favour' in Isaiah 61, quoted by our Lord Jesus Christ in his Nazareth manifesto refers to the Jubilee Year. 4. The prophetic vision of the Messianic era expressed in a number of passages also testifies to what the mission of God demands. In Is. 11:6-9 we have the prophetic vision of a world in which all nations, the strong and the weak, the big and the small live in perfect harmony and peace without any fear of insecurity or being hurt. See also Is. 2:4; Micah 4:3. 5. Is. 56:1-8 is a strong affirmation of the responsibility towards minorities so that all have an equal sense of belonging together as one people of God. 6. The Book of Jonah affirms that God's mission extends to all nations and peoples.

In the New Testament we have more radical expressions of the mission of God focussing on the work of Christ.

1. First, in the Gospel of John Jesus repeatedly reminds the disciples that he had come from God, that he had been sent by God (John 7:28-29). In his prayer in John 17 he says, "As you have sent me into the world I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18). Jesus also told the disciples, "As the Father has sent me so I send you" (John 20:21). In the Synoptic Gospels the Risen Lord asks the disciples to meet him in Galilee, telling them that he was going there before them (Mark 16:7-8; Mark 14:28; Matt. 28:7). In the Book of Acts the Risen Lord tells the disciples that when they receive the Holy Spirit they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judaea, in Samaria and in the uttermost parts of the world (Acts 1:8). In these passages the main point is that our participation in God's mission is closely linked with the discernment of the presence of Christ. How do we discern the presence of Christ today so that we may participate in his mission and ministry? Asking the disciples to meet him in Galilee suggests the continuance of the ministry which Jesus began in Galilee. Galilee is symbolic of any place or situation where the ministry of Jesus is needed or relevant. This raises the questions, what was the ministry

of Jesus? Without grasping the nature of his ministry when he was on this earth it is not possible to know what it means to meet him in Galilee and participate in his ministry. However, we also have Jesus warning against merely copying him or absolutising his words and actions. When he promised the gift of the Holy Spirit he also told the disciples that the Holy Spirit would lead them into all truth (John 16:13). He further told them that they would do greater things than what he had done (John 14:12).

2. Secondly, we should re-read what we call "the Great Commission" as recorded by the Gospel of Matthew (Matt. 28:19-20). What we have in this testimony of Evangelist Matthew is the early Church's interpretation of the mandate from the Risen Lord. The main insight is that God's mission in Christ is not simply conversion of individuals but the transformation of the corporate life of a whole community. The mandate is to make *nations* disciples of Christ, to baptize *nation*, to teach *nations* to observe all that Jesus had commanded. In the Marcan version of the Great Commission in Mark 16:15 the Gospel is to be proclaimed to "the whole creation" (RSV and NEB). In some versions the rendering is "to all the creation" and in some others it is "to every creature". In Luke 24:47 the risen Lord tells the disciples of how the scripture declares that "in his name repentance bringing the forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed to all nations". We need to bear in mind that Matthew's use of *nation* was not accidental but deliberate. In his record of the parable of the final judgement in Matt. 25:31-46 all the *nations* are gathered for judgement and not merely individuals. Certainly the Biblical use of the word *nation* is not identical with the modern nation. But it definitely does refer to the corporateness of the human community. Commenting on Matthew's use of *all nations* David J. Bosch, a Missiologist from South Africa, in his book *TRANSFORMING MISSION* has said that the mission was "to all humankind including the Jews".² The Marcan reference to the whole creation or all the creation implies that the corporateness of our existence includes not only the human but also the non-human part of creation. Traditionally Christian mission and evangelistic outreach have focussed attention on the conversion of individuals and church growth has been assessed through statistics of numbers of individuals. The Matthaean *nation* and the Marcan *whole creation* do not mean that the Church has no concern for the conversion of individuals. Individual persons have to be invited to become disciple of Christ, baptized and taught to observe the commandments of Christ. But the objective is the transformation of the corporate life of the community and ultimately of whole of creation.

It is important to bear in mind that a "person", as pointed out by Augustine, is "a relational being". No human being is just an unconnected individual. Human

beings are persons with multifarious relationship with other persons as well as with things. The conversion of a person will, therefore, necessarily lead to the transformation of all his or her relations with others as well as with the non-human reality and will result in the transformation of the corporate community including the structures, social, economic and political, of the society to which he or she belongs. This is implied in the commission to teach the *nation* to observe all that Jesus taught. The laws governing the policies of the nation with regard to all relationships have to be brought in conformity with the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. This includes today the ecological concern or concern for the environment. The ecumenical vision today is for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.

3. Thirdly, Jesus own interpretation of his mission in what is known as the Nazareth manifesto is important for the Church's understanding of its mission. Quoting from Isaiah 61:1-2 Jesus speaks of his calling 'to announce good news to the poor, to proclaim release for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to let the broken victims go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour' (Luke 4:18-19). Jesus did not read the verse referring to: 'a day of vengeance of our God'. According to the Gospel of John 'It was not to judge the world that God sent his Son into the world, but that through him the world might be saved' (John 3:17). It is interesting that the manifesto concludes with the concept of 'the acceptable year of the Lord' or 'the year of the Lord's favour'. The obvious reference is to the Jubilee Year of Lev. 25. According to this every fiftieth year was to be observed as a Jubilee Year when every one is restored to his or her ancestral property and liberation is proclaimed for all including the cancellation of debts. The idea is that, even though through the manner in which people practice their economic, political and social relations inequalities would develop, these are not to be perpetuated for ever. There should be deliberate efforts to remove the inequalities. The Jubilee Year symbolises a call for periodic restoration of a just social, economic and political order.

4. Fourthly, Christ came to reveal what authentic humanity is and to restore that humanity to us. The mission of Jesus was to make us truly human. Jose Comblin in his book *THE MEANING OF MISSION* has written, 'The object of salvation is to teach us how to be authentic human beings. The object of salvation is to make sure that we will be human beings in the fullest sense of the word'. There is an eschatological dimension in our humanity. There is a certain unfinished character in creation. The creation of the human in the 'divine image' does not refer to an accomplished fact. It represents the vision of the goal of creation. In creating the human, God willed that the human would reflect his own image the essence

of which is love. When the scripture says that God created the human in his own image we are not to take it to mean that God is like the human, but rather that the human should reflect the character of God, which is essentially love. This is the significance of the early Fathers' affirmation that God became human in order that the human may become divine.

5. Fifthly, the inclusiveness and universality of God's mission are implied in the main thrust of the prophetic teaching in the O.T. and in the N.T. The choice of Israel as God's people was not an arbitrary or whimsical choice which would suggest the rejection of others. On the contrary the choice of Israel was a model for God's solidarity with all oppressed peoples. This is categorically affirmed by prophet Amos when he wrote that in the same way God had brought Israel from Egypt he had also brought Philistines from Captor and Arameans from Kir (Amos 9:7). The Book of Jonah is a powerful affirmation of God's concern for the well being of all peoples. Isaiah 56:1-7 is a beautiful passage about how the people of Israel were to maintain justice and do what is right'. There should not be any marginalized people who are made to feel that they do not belong together as the people of God. The prophet picks up two groups, the foreigners or aliens and the eunuchs and affirms that as long as they keep the sabbaths, do God's will and hold fast to the covenant they cannot be treated as outsiders. The passage closes with the beautiful words, 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'. Jesus reminded his hearers of this vision when people questioned him about the cleansing of the temple³ (Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46). Jesus told his disciples that 'From east and west and from north and south people will come and take their places at the banquet in the kingdom of God' (Luke 13:29; Matt. 8:11). In Eph. 2:14-18 the Apostle describes Christ's mission as having removed the barrier of enmity between the Jews and the Gentiles and brought about 'a single new humanity'. In his letter to the Galatians Paul categorically says that when a person is baptized into union with Christ, 'there is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female, for you are all one person in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3:28; see also Col. 3:11).

In the Gospel of John, in the place of the message of the Kingdom of God we have the message of eternal life. Jesus mission is to bring life, abundant life and life in, all its fullness (John 10:10). His healing ministry was not merely for physical health but for wholeness of life. His teaching as well as actions challenged the divisive traditions of his time. He challenged the sexist attitudes and other social practices and attitudes to those suffering from leprosy, relations to people classified as 'publicans and sinners', and attitudes to people of other faiths such as Samaritans, Canaanites, Romans etc. His teaching and ministry was to demonstrate the inclusive love of God

and to show that the essential character of the sovereignty of God was love. Practicing what the love of God required would lead to the rejection of all forms of exclusiveness and the adoption of universal inclusiveness.

6. Sixthly, the image of the Church as the Body of Christ also provides some important insights about the mission of the Church. As John Macquarrie has said the Body of Christ is the most distinctive title for the Church.⁴ Paul in his letter to the Romans uses the image of the body to describe the relation between the believers and Christ. 'For just as in a single human body there are many limbs and organs, all with different functions, so we who are united with Christ, though many, form one body, and belong to one another as its limbs and organs' (Rom. 12:4-5). In his first letter to the Corinthians he wrote, "Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and organs, which many as they are make up one body'. (i Cor. 12:12-14). He also goes on to say, 'Now you are Christ's body, and each of you a limb or organ of it' (i Cor. 12:27). In the letter to the Ephesians also the apostle categorically describes the Church as Christ's body (Eph. 1:22-33) and speaks of 'one body and one spirit' and the "building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:4, 12). In the letter to the Colossians the Church is spoken of as the 'head of the body' (Col. 1:18). The imagery is that as the head controls the functions of all the limbs and organs of the body all the functions of the Church are controlled and directed by Christ. This would suggest the corporate apostleship of the Church, making the Church the instrument of the mission of Christ in the world. The image of the Church as Body of Christ is to be taken as parallel to image of the World as Body of God. Christ's mission is the salvation of the world, of the whole of creation and it is for the accomplishment of this mission that he has called the Church into being. The goal of the overcoming of all forms of brokenness in the Church is the removal of all forms of brokenness in the world. This is implied in the ecumenical insight of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches that unity of the Church is for the renewal of the human community.

Models for mission in history

David Bosch's book: TRANSFORMING MISSION is an important contribution to the critical understanding of different models of Christian Mission. The sub-title for this book is: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission. He reminds us that the practice of mission by the Church in different periods and in different traditions can be described in terms of different paradigms and that paradigm shift in mission has also to be understood in the light of paradigm shifts in theology. He concludes the chapter on Paradigms Changes in Missiology with the observation, 'We need the perspectives of the past in order to appreciate the scope of the present challenge and to be able really to understand the world today and the Christian response

to its predicament. Like the Israelites of old-who needed to remind themselves...of their deliverance from Egypt... we too need to be reminded of our roots, not only in order that we might have consolation but even more that we might find direction'.⁵

David J. Bosch describes the different periods as 'six epochs'. He follows the 'historico-theological subdivisions' suggested by Hans Küng dividing the entire history of Christianity into six major periods, each with its own distinctive 'paradigms' for mission. These are:

1. The apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity.
2. The Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period.
3. The medieval Roman Catholic paradigm.
4. The Protestant (Reformation) paradigm.
5. The modern Enlightenment paradigm.
6. The emerging ecumenical paradigm.

According to Hans Küng each of these periods reflects a peculiar understanding of the Christian faith. David Bosch adds that each period is also marked by a distinctive understanding of Christian mission.⁶ For primitive Christianity Bosch considers the approaches of 'three important early Christian witnesses', Matthew, Luke and Paul. For Matthew the mission was primarily Disciple-Making. Discipleship meant 'living out the teachings of Jesus'. It is also pointed out that 'discipleship involves a commitment to God's reign, to justice and love, and obedience to the entire will of God'.⁷ Bosch quotes from Jacques Matthew who wrote in an article on the Great Commission in *International Review of Missions*, 'According to Matthew's Great Commission, it is not possible to make disciples without telling them to practice God's call of justice for the poor. The love commandment which is the basis for the church's involvement in politics is an integral part of the mission commandment'. For Luke it was through the Spirit that the risen Christ was present in the community and the disciples were led into mission when they received the Spirit. The goal of the mission is not just individual conversion. 'Personal conversion is not a goal in itself. To interpret the work of the church as the winning of souls is to make conversion into a final product, which flatly contradicts Luke's understanding of the purpose of mission. Conversion...moves the individual believer into the community of believers and involves a real-even a radical-change in the life of the believer'. 'For Luke, salvation actually had six dimensions, economic, social, political, physical, psychological and spiritual....Luke seemed to have a peculiar interest in economic justice'.⁹ Paul's understanding of the mission was marked by an awareness of the cosmic dimension. God was in Christ reconciling the world, not simply the church, to himself.

Paul also had a special concern about mission to the Jews. He combines his cosmic vision of salvation with testimony to his personal faith in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, as saviour of the world.¹⁰

The first major paradigm shift occurred with what is called the hellenistic and patristic period. The new paradigm has been associated with Eastern Orthodox Christianity. 'In Orthodox thinking mission is thoroughly church-centered..... The ecclesial character of mission means that the Church is the aim, the fulfillment of the Gospel, rather than an instrument or means of mission'.¹¹ Quoting an Orthodox theologian, Bria,¹² he says, 'The Church is part of the message it proclaims. Mission is not to be regarded as a function of the Church; the Orthodox reject such instrumentalistic interpretation of the Church.....The Church is the aim of the mission, not vice versa. It is ecclesiology which determines missiology'.¹³ Another crucial element in Orthodox missiology is the place of the liturgy in mission. According to Bria 'Liturgy is the key to Orthodox understanding of the Church, and therefore the importance of liturgy for the Orthodox viewpoint on evangelism cannot be over-emphasized. Precisely because the Church is part of the message, no evangelism or mission should take place without a definite reference to its spiritual and sacramental existence'. 'The witnessing community is the community in worship: in fact the worshipping community is in and of itself an act of witness'.¹⁴

The medieval Roman Catholic paradigm had as its background the changed status of the Church. From being a small persecuted minority the Church had become a large and influential organization, particularly after Constantine. Kings and emperors felt that they were under the explicit obligation of Christian discipleship to spread Christianity. It is noted that implicitly or explicitly Luke 14:23 'and compel them to come in' inspired the new mission paradigm. Bosch has also drawn attention to the radical review of this paradigm in the Roman Catholic church following Vatican II.¹⁵

The protestant missionary paradigm, while not rejecting the medieval pattern of church-state relationship, had some distinctive characteristics because of the variety of doctrinal affirmations of faith. The affirmations of justification by faith, priesthood of all believers, the centrality of scripture, etc. gave some distinctive characteristics to the protestant approach to mission. However, the different protestant movements, Lutheran, Calvinist, Anabaptist, Wesleyan, Pietist, Puritan, had their distinctive variations.¹⁶

The modern enlightenment paradigm represents the radical shift in theology brought about by the Age of Reason, its belief in progress and optimistic faith in humankind. The western nations which had advanced in the fields of science and technology and also benefited

from their colonial domination of the less developed nations were proud of their achievements and their categories of progress and modernization were material possessions, consumerism and economic advance. The key to progress according to the enlightenment philosophy was free competition of individuals pursuing their happiness.¹⁷ The mood of optimism spread to the churches and their missions also. Bosch points out that 'Above all the new mood spawned a missionary spirit. By 1817 the missionary cause had become the great passion of the American churches. Indeed foreign missions had become the new orthodoxy'.¹⁸ He suggests that William Carey's famous slogan, 'Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God' expressed the prevailing mood of optimism. One of the consequences of the impact of the enlightenment on theology and mission was the emphasis on the social dimensions of the Gospel and the interpretation of mission in terms of sharing the benefits of modern civilization with the less fortunate peoples. 'Abundant life was interpreted as the abundance of the good things that modern education, healing and agriculture would provide for the deprived peoples of the world'.¹⁹

It is also to be noted that during the same period there developed conservative and fundamentalist interpretations of the Gospel and missions promoting such interpretations. There was a polarisation between those described as 'liberals' and the others described as 'fundamentalists', 'conservatives' or 'evangelicals'. Bosch point out that on the attitude of 'Western superiority' there was not much difference between evangelicals and social gossellers.²⁰ After explaining the complex nature of the enlightenment paradigm Bosch devotes one chapter to the refutation of all the major characteristics of the enlightenment in what he calls the emergence of 'a post modern paradigm'.²¹

For the discernment of the emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm Bosch draws attention to the insights of the International Missionary Conferences as well as the missionary encyclicals of the Roman Catholic church. There is a certain convergence of thought in the Roman Catholic and non-Roman Catholic ecumenical understanding of Church and Mission. Bosch writes, 'The Church is no longer described as a societal entity on a par with other societal structures like the state, but as the mystery of God's presence in the world, in the nature of a sacrament, sign and instrument of community with God and unity among people. The whole tenor of the argument is new. The Church is not presenting itself imperiously and proudly but humbly; it does not define itself in legal categories or as an elite of exalted souls, but as a servant community'.²² Bearing this general perspective in mind Bosch goes on to deal with a number of important issues relating to the

meaning and practice of mission such as the meaning of salvation, the tension between justice and love, the meaning of evangelism, liberal theology and liberation theology, mission and inculturation, witness to people of other living faiths, Dialogue and Mission etc.

His concluding words are 'Looked at from this perspective, mission is, quite simply, the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus, wagering on a future that verifiable experience seems to belie. It is good news of God's love, incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world'.

The Indian Context

It is bearing in mind these perspectives and different mission paradigms that we look at the frontiers for mission in the Indian context today. A word also needs to be said about the methodology of approach. We do not simply have an absolute blueprint for us to apply as guideline for mission. There is no mission programme which can be copied for all situations. One has to be sensitive to discern what the Holy Spirit tells us about Christ's mission in different contexts.

1. First is the Church's mission in the context of religious pluralism. We need to consider three issues in this regard. The first is the reality of religious fundamentalism and communalism threatening the peace and inter-religious harmony envisaged by the objectives of the Indian constitution. During the last two decades the failure of successive governments as well as some political parties have resulted in the erosion of commitment to the ideals of the secular state. Hindu, Islamic and Sikh fundemetalism and communalism have posed serious threats not only to the goals of the secular state but also to national unity and integrity. The Church's mission does have a role in relation to the quest for communal harmony and peace and the safeguarding of the secular character of the state in which people of all faiths can live together, enjoying equal rights and without fear of any discrimination.

Secondly, the ecumenical concern for an appropriate response to religious pluralism, through both the World Council of Churches and the post-Vatican II Roman Catholic Church, has led to the development of the dialogue approach. The adoption of the dialogue approach does not call for any particular model of dialogue. Nor does it require any compromise on one's commitment to his or her faith or the calling to witness to the faith. However, dialogue does presuppose a certain measure of openness to learn from others, and an attitude of respect for other people's faith and religious practice. Dialogue can result in mutual correction and enrichment. Through re-reading

the Gospels we may also learn from Jesus way of drawing attention to the greatness of the faith of other people such as the Samaritans, the Syrophoenecian woman and the Roman centurion.

Thirdly, the context of religious pluralism also calls for radical re-thinking of our ecclesiology. We need to rethink the nature of the Church and the meaning of Baptism as a sacrament of commitment to the unity that Christ gives to the human community.

2. A second frontier for the Church's mission is the struggle for economic justice and the glaring gap between the affluent and the deprived. It is estimated that about 40% of the population, or more than 300 million people live below poverty line. A large section of the urban poor loving in slums and the rural poor are subjected to sub-human living conditions. Particularly today we are faced with the consequences of the new economic policy of liberalization, globalization and privatization on the weaker sections. The churches have to join forces with those who call upon the Government to give high priority to attending to the needs of the weaker sections in the implementation of the new economic policy. It is unrealistic to be merely recreating slogans against GATT etc. Now the WTO has become an inevitable reality. But the Government, if it really represents the whole nation, has to be concerned about all sections of people, not merely the rich. Actually the rich can take care of themselves. It is the poor and the powerless whom the Government should help to empower so that then can become self-reliant and regain their legitimate human dignity.

3. Mission is for for Social Transformation. We need to look at the structures in which we live and operate.

- a. The Caste issue and the problem of Dalits. The churches in Asia do have a background of having a concern for social transformation. Several unjust forms of the practice of cast including slavery and oppression of the lower castes were opposed by the churches and missions in different situations. However, unfortunately caste based injustices continue. The churches too are not free from caste discriminations.
- b. In India today the concern for justice should include the promotion and strengthening of secular democracy, commitment for human rights, communal harmony and cooperation for the removal of all forms of violence

including terrorist violence as well as institutionalised violence. Churches should find ways of cooperating with organizations and agencies working for secularism, democracy and communal harmony.

- c. In missionary outreach we need to identify communities living in illiteracy, ignorance, superstitions, neglected and marginalized and develop programmes which will bring to them the knowledge of the love of God through Jesus Christ and restore to them their God-given human dignity.

NOTES

¹ Norman Gottwald: THE TRIBES OF YAHWEH

² David J. Bosch: TRANSFORMING MISSION-Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission. Maryknoll, New York. Orbis Books. 1991. pp 63-64.

³ John Macquarrie: PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY. (Revised Edition). London. S.C.M. Press. 1977 p. 388.

⁴ See Sally McFague: MODELS OF GOD.

⁵ David J. Bosch: TRANSFORMING MISSION-Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission. Maryknoll, New York. Orbis Books. 1991.

⁶ op cit. p 182

⁷ op. cit. p 81.

⁸ Bosch. op cit pp 81-82. Jacques Matthew: Great Commission According to Matthew. *International Review of Missions* Vol. 69. 1980. pp 161-173.

⁹ op. cit. p 117.

¹⁰ op. cit pp 170-178.

¹¹ op cit p 207.

¹² Ion Bria: THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN EVANGELISM-Icon or Platform? *International Review of Missions* 1995 Vol 64. pp 243-250.

¹³ Bosch. op cit p 207

¹⁴ op cit p 208.

¹⁵ op cit pp 236-238

¹⁶ Bosch. op cit Ch. 8.

¹⁷ op cit pp 265-267

¹⁸ op cit p 279.

¹⁹ op cit p 293

²⁰ op cit p 342.

²¹ op cit ch.10. pp 351-362.

²² op cit pp. 371-372.

Reflections on the Socio-Economic Scenario

REV. S. MANICKAM, *Tirunelveli*

When we think about Indian villagers one cannot forget the proverbial saying:

Indian villagers are born in debt; live in debt; die in debt and bequeath debt.

It is not just a proverb; it is a reality. The outcome of this situation is inequalities in wealth causing social unrest. This, in turn, has led to : (i) Over-population; (ii) Under nourishment both quantitatively and qualitatively; (iii) Unemployment and under-employment; (iv) Early marriages; (v) Dependence on parents; (vi) High rate of suicides; (vii) Rowdiness and the growing cult of violence and terrorism.

Speaking about the Economic resources of Indian, Gandhiji remarked, 'there was enough and more for every India citizen's need, but not enough for everyone's greed'. Gandhiji's remarks are still quite relevant to conditions obtaining in India. Now the question is 'Where does the Church stand in the midst of the Social and moral crisis?'

The poor will not be inclined to hear the message of salvation if they are in the grip of hunger, disease and despair. What they need first and foremost is bread to keep their body and soul together. So development projects that will help people buy enough food for themselves and for their families are of great importance. The Church should try hard to increase an awareness and understanding of the need for economic and social development among the people.

It may be asked 'What do we need to accelerate development?' To accelerate economic development we need time to spare, effort with determination and sincerity and sufficient money to invest in the development projects. In Church we have enough men and women to devote their time and put in their effort for these development activities.

We do not lack any labour force or human resource. In the olden days people were reluctant to move from one place to another to accept employment. But now with

the coming in of rapid means of transportation and communication, people are not averse to work in distant places from their homes. Thus we are assured of a good supply of labour that has mobility.

One redeeming feature is the willingness of the Nationalised Banks and even scheduled Banks to come forward to provide loans to the unemployed graduates and others who are planning to set up small-scale business or industrial units. In the olden days the Banks would never lend unless sufficient collateral security (i.e, property in the shape of land and building pledged as security for repayment of a loan) could be provided by the borrower. But now the Nationalised Banks have been accorded the permission by the Union Government to lend to genuine borrowers the loan that they need for purposes of starting small business. The rules governing the grant of loans have been very much liberalised.

One of the best means of achieving development is to encourage people living in rural areas form themselves into associations and have them registered under the Government Society Act in order to secure financial assistance from the Banks.

Associations for 'Bee-Keeping, Sheep-farming, Women's-Sewing and Palm-leaf Weavers' could be formed all over the rural areas. One advantage that the Association would have lies in getting loan facilities from the Banks through them for development projects.

With the money secured from the Banks, the masses in the rural areas could mobilise the locally available skills and talents and purchase the indigenously grown raw materials for the purpose of making marketable products and then raise money through their sale. The sale proceeds obtained therefrom would help the uplift of the oppressed and exploited working communities and liberate them from the clutches of middle-men and usurious money lenders.

To give some illustrations of small-scale and cottage industries they can be taught to make fancy articles of export quality with the Palm-tree leaves easily and readily

available in the most parts of our countryside. Again, there is plenty of quality clay which could help the people in rural areas to make bricks and earthenware through installation of brick-kiln. The manufacturing of bricks can give boost to house-construction which would help the poor have a roof over their heads. Yet another raw material that is available is the bamboo growing by river, ponds etc. These bamboos could be utilised for making canes, mats, baskets, furniture and even to build houses of bamboos. The benefits that would accrue to the people in the rural areas through the means of co-operative association are immense. These benefits could be in the shape of psychological and material ones.

When the oppressed and down-trodden poor people are assured of earning their own means of livelihood, they

get a sense of pride a sense of achievement and a sense of independence in that they can have a regular and sure source of supplementary income of the family to eke out their livelihood. Above all, the poor who were hitherto in a state of despair and desolation will positively have something to look forward to. The increase in the standard of living and the psychological boost that the poor get through these measures will make them shed the feeling of dismay and discontent and instead create in the feeling of unity among the members of the families. Eventually it would go a long way to bring about national integrity. Development is the new name for peace. The message I'd like to drive home is-We don't want charity; instead we need partnership and cooperation of International families to make India better and happier place to live in.

Sri Lanka's conflict is not religious, says President

Colombo, 12 June (ENI)—Sri Lanka's President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, has urged members of Asia's churches to help dispel 'the lie' that religious bigotry is at the heart of the violent ethnic struggle troubling Sri Lanka.

She told the 10th assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia, meeting in Colombo, on Saturday 10 June, that a spirit of religious tolerance reigned in Sri Lanka where the dominant faith was Buddhism, a religion 'unique in its unstained record of tolerance'.

Sri Lanka is a multicultural country. The biggest group is the Sinhalese majority (about 73 per cent); the other major group is Tamils, divided into Ceylon Tamils (12 per cent) and Indian Tamils (five per cent).

Buddhism arrived in Sri Lanka 2,300 years ago. About 70 per cent of Sri Lankans, including President Kumaratunga, are followers of Buddhism, which is the official religion. Sri Lanka also has a large Hindu minority, including many Tamils. There are also smaller Christian and Muslim minorities.

The tolerance of which the President spoke is evident in the location of many of Sri Lanka's Buddhist temples immediately adjacent to Muslim mosques, Hindu temples and Christian churches.

Kenneth Fernando, Anglican Bishop of Colombo, welcomed President Kumaratunga to the CCA assembly on Saturday, describing her as a person whose genuine commitment to the cause of peace was well known internationally.

The President, who was elected in November 1994, explained to the 400 delegates and guests from throughout Asia attending the CCA assembly that the ethnic warfare in Sri Lanka had nothing to do with religion.

'The fact that this key conference is being held here is a tribute to the spirit of tolerance which is characteristic of this country', she said, adding that she hoped it would help disprove the allegations that the local conflict was a result of religious bigotry.

She welcomed the CCA's work for fellowship and peace in Asia, and said the goal of her presidency was to eliminate the 'recent pernicious influences' which were seeking to divide Sri Lanka's people.

President Kumaratunga publicly thanked Bishop Fernando who has been a leading figure in efforts for peace. 'His courage and understanding of the human side of the problem helped us to continue in our efforts for peace and amity amidst many challenges and sometime impossible demands from the other side,' she said.

—EDMUND DOOGUE

Basic Rights of the Dalits and Indigenous People*

REV. DR. JAMES MASSEY**

Your Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, The Moderator of the Church of North India and friends.

I feel privileged to present before you very briefly the Key issues related to two of the main Communities of India, namely the Dalits and the Indigenous people.

It is very difficult to deal with the issues or the kind of problems these two communities are facing, within a few minutes. Their situation is part of the religious-cultural-social and historic context of our country. Historically, these two communities fall in the category of indigenous people of the country, who at one point in history were conquered and subjugated by the people known as Aryan. The so-called Aryans not only defeated these two communities physically, but also ruthlessly oppressed them throughout the centuries, both culturally and religiously. They even created a religious based system that we today call 'Varna or Caste System', which they used to identify the genuineness of human identity. Those who did not fit in their caste structured societal system, were declared outside the purview of the human boundaries and therefore they were declared outcastes, which also implied-not being fully human.

The real success of their oppression upon the members of these communities was seen in the fact that these oppressed people with time also started believing that they were/are inferior human beings. This truth even became a part of their very inner being.

As mentioned earlier, it will not be possible to describe the present real situation of these two communities except to say that today after 45 years of the country's freedom, they still live the same old life. For our guests and visitors it may seem after seeing some of the urban scenes and also by meeting a few of the individuals like myself who share this background, that the situation has changed. But it is not true in fact. On paper, constitutionally

and the various actions taken at different levels by our Central and State Governments, it appears that there are a number of programmes going on to improve the situation of the people of these two communities. But if one will go through the document like the Twenty-Eighth Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for the period 1986-87, one will see that the situation in some of the life areas of these people has worsened. The author of the Twenty-Eight Report Dr. B.D. Sharma, the Commissioner has even brought out the first part of his report in the form of a book under the title 'Dalits Betrayed' (1994) where he has tried to expose the real situation which these two communities of ours are facing.

Again there is no way, the contents of this Report can be discussed in detail in limited time. Only one can possibly summarize the main issues which are being faced by these two communities.

A. Indigenous people

I. Issues

The Basic Issues and Demands which the members of the Indigenous Community in our country are fighting for are: a) land, b) forest, c) water resources and d) identity.

- a) *Land* : Here one sees a total violation of the existing Protection Land Laws by state authorities and various private companies and individuals. They have invented new methods to justify their actions also. Therefore, one finds the indigenous people get more and more alienated and displaced in the name of development, which includes putting up new industries, mines, big dams, urban centers and military operations.
- b) *Forest* : In the case of Forest Laws one again finds the people deprived of their traditional rights, which include collection of forest produces, cultural sustenance,

* Paper presented at the recent visit of the Archbishop Carey.

** The Rev. Dr. James Massey is the General Secretary of the Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (ISPK), Delhi, India.

acquisition of forest land for commercial purposes, construction of big dams, irrigational projects and other similar operations which create similar problems connected with the forest rights of the indigenous people.

- c) **Water Resources** : Because of the same above commercial and various developments, the indigenous people further face a problem of displacement, epidemic, loss of fertility of land and they face a lot of hardship even in the collection of drinking water.
- d) **Identity** : In the name of bringing the indigenous communities into the main line or in the name of national integration today, the indigenous communities are faced with identity crisis, loss in egalitarian world outlook, loss of use of mother-tongue, non-recognition of the traditional belief system, breaking down of community life and negatively affecting the relationship between the humans and nature and even no-recognition of them as indigenous people of India.

II. Demands

The following are some of the major demands which are being put forward by the members of the indigenous communities:

- a) Right to self-determination (political) and right to be different (socio-cultural).
- b) Giving them a status of the indigenous people.
- c) Stopping further land alienation.
- d) Implementation of the ILO Convention 107 (1957).
- e) Implementation of the World Bank Guideline on the issue of land use for developmental projects funded by the World Bank.
- f) Restoration of land from Military.
- g) Stopping construction of big dams.

There are a number of other similar demands including-stopping mining and forest cutting etc.

B. Dalits

I. Issues

In the case of Dalits, a number of constitutional and other Govt. Acts have been passed by our Parliament, for example the Constitution has fully recognised both the historical reason as well as need to provide special care and protection of the Dalits. It is also affirmed that nobody in the country will be discriminated against on the basis of religion. Even the Government has passed Acts like Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955/1976 to deal with the

question of untouchability and also the Act of 1989 to prevent the atrocities meted out to the Dalits by the so called upper castes. But again the Twenty-Eighth Report of Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes mentioned above has already very clearly shown that different kinds of atrocities, which include murder, rape, destruction of properties etc. are increasing every year.

Even the provision for the special courts provided under the above special Acts are not able to provide the real justice to the Dalits. In the rural areas where more than 80% of the Dalits are living, their place of living is still segregated from the others. Untouchability is also being practiced fully in various Village situations. They are not allowed to drink water from a public well or use the various public facilities. Most of the policy of reservation either in the areas of education of various developmental categories are just on paper and at the present time when some awareness is seen in the life of the members of the Dalit communities, even for that their very lives are threatened. The issue of their basic human rights are at stake and are violated regularly.

The worst thing in the case of Dalits is that the Government is able to divide them on the basis of religion because the Presidential Order of 1950 (which was later on amended in 1956 and 1990) offers various developmental facilities only to the Dalits who professes Hinduism, Sikhism or Buddhism. These rights are denied to the Dalits belonging to Christian and Muslim faiths. In their case even the above Special Rights Act of 1955/1976 as well as the Prevention of Atrocities Act 1989 are not applicable also. This means they can be murdered, injured, and their women can be raped, but no special provision can be offered, which at least there is on paper for the Dalits belonging to Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism. Here the Christian and Muslim Dalits are not only faced with the denial of their fundamental rights, but are also denied their very basic human rights (the right to live). With regard to the Christian Dalits the situation gets further worse, when they get discriminated among their own communities by the converts from the upper caste.

C. Demands

I. General

- a) The implementation of the Civil Rights (Untouchability) Act of 1955 and 1965.
- b) The implementation of the various reservation rights, in education, giving Central and Government jobs and placing them in the higher decision-making process.

II. Special Demands of Christian Dalits :

- a) The Discrimination prevailing against the Dalits within the Christian community at various levels should be stopped.
- b) A due place in the Church and Christian Institutions, specially in the area of decision-making should be given to Dalits.

- c) Doors of Christian Institutions should be opened to Christian Dalits in such a way, that they are able to avail these facilities.
- d) The discrimination against Christian Dalits on the ground of religion, which is their fundamental right should be stopped and they should be given equal rights as given to Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhist Dalits, and for this, amendment should be made to the Presidential Order of 1950 to include Christians of Scheduled Caste Origin (Dalits) also.
- e) The Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955/1976 and prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989 should also be amended in order to include in their purview the Christians of scheduled caste origin for their protection.
- f) Political representation from the village community to Parliament is a Fundamental Right which should also be given to them.

III. Response Expected from the Churches in India and Overseas:

- a) The first and the foremost demand on the Churches in India and Overseas is of their bold and fearless prophetic role, which possibly is the only way through which they can show their solidarity with the Dalits and the Indigenous people.
- b) Indian Churches and members of the Christian communities in general should respond positively and should show solidarity in the various struggle undertaken by the Christian Dalits in order to get their equal rights. The Churches unitedly should put pressure on the Government on behalf of the Christian Dalits.
- c) Churches can show their solidarity to the Dalits in general along with Christian Dalits for the eradication of untouchability.
- d) Churches should respond positively in restoring first the basic rights of the Christian Dalits within their own boundaries and then also facilitate restoring these rights in the community in general.

- e) In the same way our overseas partner Churches must give priority while supporting the programmes carried on by the Churches and Christian organisations for the development of Dalits in general as well as Christian Dalits.
- f) Our overseas partners should also press their own various government diplomatic and other channels to put pressure on the Government of India to give basic rights to both the indigenous as well as Dalits particularly Christian Dalits, which include both human as well as fundamental rights.
- g) Our overseas partner Churches can help internationalizing the Christian Dalit issue along with the Dalits in general through media, dialogue and by providing exchange facilities.
- h) The National and the Overseas Churches can also work for a change of stand upon the elite ruling minority (which is representing basically the Indian Urban-organised sector), which has perfected their command over the natural resources and the national economy directly or indirectly and are now keen to integrate with the Global Economic Order, because the first victims of this Order in India are also the members of the above two communities.

Finally I am happy to conclude this brief presentation by sharing with you that at present an All India Inter-faith Dalit Solidarity Programme (DSP) has been started with the help of Churches in India, the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches and our other partners, both within the country and outside, and now it has entered its second year and has already spread to seventeen States; and the main task before DSP is to gain a solidarity among the members of various Dalit communities including indigenous people and also seek solidarity from the people belonging to other communities to help us to achieve our basic and human rights and we hope and pray the Churches within the country and Overseas will continue to extend their support to DSP, which is trying to mobilize the Dalits to face the above challenges themselves.



Rediscovering Russia's religious heritage

Distinguished historian Dr. James H. Billington, the current Librarian of Congress, knows more about Russia than its history; he knows its heart and soul. His landmark book *The Icon and the Axe* (1966) traces the spiritual history of Russia for the past thousand years. His latest book, *Russia Transformed: Breakthrough to Hope* (1992), probes the significance of the recent starting events in that country.

On an unexpectedly sunny Friday morning last February, this former Rhodes Scholar and member of the editorial advisory boards of *Foreign Affairs* and *Theology Today* sat in his office overlooking the Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress and reflected on the spiritual and religious implications of what's happening in Russia today.

Trinity News: You've written about religion as an all-permeating force within Russian culture. Is that still true?

James Billington : I think it's not only still true, but it's more true now than it has been at any time since the pre-Revolutionary period. There's been a substantial religious revival in the last four or five years.

My latest book is called *Russia Transformed : Breakthrough to Hope*. I happened to be there at the time of the *putsch*, and I include in the book ways in which, subliminally, they were... rediscovering, almost without realizing it, their religious heritage.

I point out such things as the fact that the *putsch* began on the Feast of the Transfiguration, which is a major feast. It was the opening of a Congress of compatriots, bringing all Russian emigres back and bringing a lot of people from the deep Russian interior. It began with the Liturgy in the Cathedral of the Assumption. The Patriarch opened the doors leading into the main square and the interior of the Kremlin and delivered his general message to the people at the very time the tanks were rolling into Red Square. You could hear the tanks in the background. And, after some hesitation, the Patriarch issued a rather moving prayer on the second night, which was broadcast to the people outside the White House resisting the coup, anathematizing bloodshed among Russians. And the Parliament convened after the overthrow of the *putsch*

on the Feast of the Assumption. So the two feasts most distinctive to Orthodoxy, and least understood in Western churches, were kind of the defining moments in the change of regime.

[Also], the role of old women. Everyone used to say that in Russia religion was just a province of the old women. In fact, in the crucial time [during the *putsch*] when the tanks were poised to attack but didn't have orders to attack, the people who went out to the tanks and talked to the young boys in the tanks tended to be the old women, who rebuked them in moral, even in religious terms. They were suddenly their mothers, their conscience, as they remained the conscience and the bearers of the spiritual culture through the time when it was practically impossible for people in the mainstream of Soviet life to be associated with the church. These women remained faithful.

TN: Where had Russia's religious tradition gone during the years of oppression?

JB: The Soviet period is a period of great trauma for the Christian witness of the dominant Orthodox Church. The recent opening of the archives has meant that people have gotten a dual image of the Church. One, as a far greater martyr and sufferer than many people have realized, but, also, to some extent, particularly at the higher levels, as a sort of docile collaborator with the regime.

What we see now in the Orthodox Church is a very interesting phenomenon. On the one hand, it has become a new source of legitimation for the society. For instance, in the recent crisis in October....the Church was the only side that everybody could turn to as a possible mediator. So its general authority has risen.

On the other hand, for the reformers the Church is still seen as... playing a role of too-close collaboration with the State. And it's aspiring now to be a kind of a established Church in line with the conservative forces of nationalism and reaction, emphasizing the Russian uniqueness against the West, rather than participating in the community of democratic nations.

TN : What role does the Church play in the average Russian's life?

JB : There's a great increase in church attendance.

There's a particularly great increase in parish activities. The growth of parishes has outstripped the number of qualified priests and trained people. It's outstripping the resources of the Orthodox Church. But they are rising to the occasion.

It's in this area of theological training that Western Churches are helping, to some degree. There's the Adopt-a-Seminarian Program, which I think the Episcopal Church had been active in. And the Sister Parish Program. These are very important, because they seem to represent a fraternal hand extended to the Orthodox Church.

TN : Do you feel that there's a special relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Anglican Communion?

JB : There's no question of it. I was with delegation of the Episcopal Church in Russia in 1986, and I noted on many occasions that there is a very special feeling of warmth toward the Anglican Communion. There's a feeling that the common centrality of the liturgy and the respect for the apostolic heritage-as well as this certain scholarly sympathy that has existed for some centuries between the Anglican and the Orthodox communions-gives a kind of special relationship.

TN : What might that relationship accomplish?

JB : I think it can accomplish a great deal because I think they have many practical needs in developing the Orthodox Church. They would like, I think, direct relations with Western Christians who are interested in strengthening their church rather than proselytizing members away from it. I don't mean to demean the activity of the more fundamentalist Protestant community, or Roman Catholics. But I think there is an opportunity for the Anglicans and, to some extent, perhaps, for the Lutherans and some of the others who maintain a more traditional liturgical form of worship, to have a supportive relationship with the Orthodox that a new generation of Orthodox are interested in exploring.

One young Orthodox priest that I know, who's typical of the younger generation, said that you have to realize that the people of Israel when they left bondage in Egypt didn't reach the promised land right away. They only reached it after all those who were shaped by the time of bondage had died off. That's sort of the image that many of the younger priests have. That you won't have a truly free and self-sustaining Orthodox Church until all those who lived through the moral compromises of that period have died off. In other words, when a new generation of hierarchs emerges.

There's now a deep struggle going on between a neo-imperial, nationalist identity for the Russian people and a more democratic, federative free society. And I think they realize that in free society there has to be some form of inner responsibility. If you're not going to have external force deciding everything, which some in the Church hierarchy still like to do, cling to that crutch, then you have to have some inner resources of responsibility.

TN : Does the danger exist that the ROC will become the new repressor?

JB : Well, the Church is once again being subjected to what you might call the Caesarpapist temptation, which the Byzantine Church before it was subjected to. Zhirinovsky, for instance-who is an out-and-out... more a Nazi than a Fascist, in the sense that he really believes in ethnic cleansing and therapeutic use of violence and an imperial identity for Russia-says all Russians should be Orthodox and that it should be the mark of a Russian citizen. What he's really arguing for-and it's very tempting for some in the Russian Orthodox Church-is, so to speak, Orthodox without Christianity. It's really a kind of a Orthodoxy as a form of social discipline and as a source of buttressing autocracy and forcing discipline on the society. And that point of view gets some sympathy from people who see the outbreak of crime and licentiousness, the growth of pornography, all the things that are occurring with a more free and open society.

On the other hand, there are beautiful new breakthroughs involved among some younger theologians. And what you're seeing also is a growth of a generalized religious consciousness among the population, so that religion is not simply something imposed from on top, with large state subsidies. It's something that's growing from below, and the Church has to go out to meet it.

TN : What are your hopes for Russia right now?

JB : Well, my hope for Russia is that they can discover, first of all, the wisdom, utility, and even morality of more responsive and accountable forms of both government and economic activity, which require openness, freedom and mobility. But, at the same time, fully rediscover that which is essential to making a democracy and, for that matter, market economic life responsible. Namely, that these things only work if you have a moral people, and you only have a moral people if you have a religious basis. That's just empirically proven to be the fact.

Church Growth in South Korea

A New Apostolic Experience

BISHOP D.C. GORAI, *Calcutta*

1. In recent times, the term 'Church growth' is being heard quite frequently. Many Pastors and Theologians have begun to pay attention to dynamics and methods of Church growth. The Korean Church is one of the fastest growing Churches in the history of Christian Mission. This is well known all over the world. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the Providence of God. The Church in South Korea is continuing to grow both in quantity and quality. The increase in the number of new believers and the intensification of the spiritual level of Korean Christians and their degree of dedication to the Lord and to the Gospel are noticeable especially during the recent decades. I have compiled this article in order to share some of the insights that we acquired in our recent visit to Korea, attending a 9 day Seminar and exposure program in the Seoul Presbyterian Church. I do this with the hope that this will be useful to all of us in recapitulating the Power of the Holy Spirit and the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our lives, in our time and in our Churches, so that renewal and revival may come in our Churches.

2. The South Korean Churches celebrated the centennial year of the Protestant Missions in 1984, The Roman Catholic Church is 200 years old. In 1884, 108 years ago, the first Presbyterian Missionary from North America went to Korea to evangelise the people in this hermit nation. He was followed by the first Methodist Missionary in 1885. These Missionaries adopted and practiced the Nevius Method and Principle of Mission work, that is Self-Support, Self-Government and Self-Propagation of the Gospel as their Missionary strategy. In due course of time this yielded very good and dramatic results. The Revd. and Mrs. John Nevius, a missionary couple in China came to Korea in June 1890. The Nevius principles were significant factors in the growth and strength of the Korean Church.

3. 1907-Pentecostal Experience

After the advent of the Protestant Missionaries in 1884, the Korean Christians devoted a good deal of their time in prayer, fasting and Bible study and were hungry

for the word of God. They regularly met in prayer meetings. The Miracle took place in 1907. About 1500 people were in prayer and fasting when the Holy Spirit broke upon them and brought conviction of sin, cleansing and empowerment leading to Spiritual rebirth.

The great awakening following this event marks the spiritual rebirth of the Korean Church. This experience gave the Christians in Korea a distinctive character of their own. There occurred a change in the moral tone of the Christian community, with deep seated religious habits of prayer, fasting, Bible study, preaching and giving tithes for God's work. This became a part and parcel of their Christian life and vocation, which is very much evident in most Churches, even after 85 years of that Spiritual event mentioned above. All Christians long to have the same experience and are always prepared to pay the price of his/her faith and conviction.

4. Although, the Missionaries and Christians in Korea were subjected to severe trials and persecution up to 1950, they remained firm in their faith and have tirelessly proclaimed the gospel to the Nation. The strength of the Korean Church lies in the local Churches, who under the leadership of the Pastors, have trained the laity for their Ministries in evangelism, mission, the Christian home teaching and social service. It is evident that the Church can grow according to the measure of the positive and spirit-filled leadership of the Pastors and lay leaders. Transformation of the Lay People—men, women, youth and children has been possible due to the continuous 'discipleship training program of the Church during the last one hundred years.

Korean Christians took a very active part in the national independence struggle. The Church was the stronghold of the freedom fighters. As such, the Korean Christians have a combination of evangelism plus national consciousness (a positive form of spiritual nationalism) clearly indicating that God has chosen the nation of Korea to be a holy nation, a second Israel, to serve other nations and to evangelize with the love and gospel of Jesus Christ.

They believe that God wants them to be responsible for world evangelism in the next one or two decades. Hence, they subject themselves to Christian discipleship training and holy living with a sense of eschatological vision and vocation, that is, the hour is urgent, Christ is coming soon. They firmly believe that without vision people perish. They have a dream and a vision for the whole world. They want that every Christian must become an effective witness and must be trained in carrying out personal evangelism.

5. The Korean Church is a Suffering Church

After the close of World War II in 1945, the Peninsula of Korea was divided at the will of the then two Super-powers. Then in 1950, its fate was worsened by the Communist war. The war cost the lives of 300,000 Christian believers and the arrest and abduction of more than 1000 Church leaders together with the destruction of more than 2000 Church buildings. Even in such a depressing climate the missionary zeal of the people continued unabated. Even from the ashes of destruction, the Korean Church sent missionaries to Thailand and Taiwan.

'My Temple will be called The House of Prayer' Luke 18 : 46. Indeed this is really true of Korean Church buildings where prayers are regularly offered. Mass Prayer is so very effective for renewal and revival in the life of the Church. Because of the fervent prayer life of most Korean Christians, several characteristics are clearly evident in the life of the Korean Churches. Korean Christians emphasize the 'experiential' more than the intellectual side of the faith.

6. The Korean Church is a Praying Church

Korean Churches are 'Churches of the Morning Prayer.' Every Church practises early morning Prayer, Meetings, All Night Prayer Meetings, fasting and praying for several days at a time at a Prayer Mountain or Retreat Centre, where they go in groups for spiritual renewal. Prayer is a dynamic factor in the Korean Church. Pastors are equipped spiritually through their daily early morning prayer meetings at about 5 am/5.30 am surrounded by a group of men and women of prayers who take upon themselves the responsibility for the spiritual care of their congregations. The attendance of the early morning prayer are very encouraging.

7. Church Growth

A Praying Church is a Missionary Church and it cannot refrain from becoming a witnessing Community. A Praying Church is a growing Church and the Korean Church is an exemplar in this. At the end of World War II, the total number of believers was about 300,000. Since then the number has doubled in every 10 years: about

600,000 in 1955, about 1200,000 in 1965, about 2400,000 in 1975. The 1980 statistics show that the total Christians including Roman Catholics are over 8500,000. Present total Christian population is about 11,477,575. The total South Korean population is 42 million, of which 29% are Christians. Protestants account for 23.5%. And Catholics 5.5%. The number of Churches: Protestant-33,503, Catholic-765. There has not been a mass conversion but rather many became believers through individual or personal evangelism. One by one, Sunday after Sunday, every Church is adding to its members. There are more than 35,000 congregations in Korea. Korean Theologians affirm that the primary agent for evangelization of Asia is the National Church within each country. They must aspire to evangelize their own nation.

8. Some Characteristics of a Korea Church

i) Leadership of the Pastors

The strength of the local Church is under the leadership of the Pastors. The Korean Church set aside the best qualified people to do evangelistic work among their neighbours. The Pastors are most hard working people, duly supported and upheld by dedicated elders/deacons/leaders. The Korean Pastors are well looked after by their Church.

The Korean Church is growing because Christians are enthusiastic about worship and evangelism. They religiously read their Bible and try to behave like the Apostolic Church/early Church Christians. The Pastors train the laity for shared Pastoral work through team ministry for proper pastoral care of the people. Eph. 4 : 11 - 16. Small group/cell/house church activity has been adopted for Church growth following the model of John Wesley's class meeting/leaders' meetings under a trained leader.

ii) Suffering Church

Korean Christians have suffered a lot at the hands of the Japanese, and other aggressors who were hostile to Christianity, yet they did not give up their faith and had the courage of their convictions. The Korean Churches are built on the blood of Martyrs. 'The blood of the Martyrs is the seed of the Church.' This is true of Korea. They have made great sacrifice for their faith. As such they are not ashamed of the Gospel-but have a dream not only for their country, but for the whole world.

iii) A witnessing Church for grassroot evangelism

The Christianization of Korea by AD 2000 is the motto of every Korea Church/Congregation. New theological graduates are being sent to new areas to establish new Churches under the care of experienced Pastors with the initial support from

the sending Church. Almost every local Church talks about mission and sends its own missionaries. Every Church is entirely absorbed with constructing/reconstructing a larger Church building with scope for further expansion programmes.

iv) A Praying Church

The Korean people are praying people. They cannot think of doing anything without prayer. Everybody prays. I have already mentioned their prayer life. In early morning Prayer Meetings and at Sunday Services, they have the opportunity to pray together in one voice. This is wonderful. The attendances are always housefull.

v) A Giving Church

Korean Pastors have taught their Parishioners the Biblical concept of tithing (one tenth of one's income) to the Church. Most believers pay tithes as their personal monthly contribution to the Church. In addition to this, also contribute generously at various prayer meetings and Sunday services and also support various other Mission projects. It is a joy for them to give for the work of God. In Mt. 26 : 6 -13 there is a passage about 'Holy waste'-holy expenditure for God's love. This has influenced them. From this it follows that the act of giving must be holy. This is what Koreans practice as a sacred rite, as an expression of their faith, in a living and loving Lord.

vi) A Missionary Minded Church

It was way back in 1912 that the Korean Church started its first cross Cultural Mission in China (Shan-tung). At present there are some 1200 Korean Missionaries in 87 countries from 54 Mission agencies and more Missionaries are working with the Koreans in Diaspora, that is Koreans settled in Japan, China, the U.S.A., Canada and other countries. Korean Christians hope and pray that they will be able to send 10,000 Missionaries by AD 2000 for the evangelization of the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They joyfully meet all the expenses incurred for their missionaries and for the support of the work initiated by them. Every congregation longs to send out missionaries.

Para-Church Group Work

More than 70% of these outreach movements are supported outside the budget of the local Church, by individual Christians who have been supporting Para-Church organizations, outside conventional Churches. This trend is growing everyday.

vii) Strong Theological Education

There are more than 170 Bible Institutions and Theological Seminaries in South Korea with more than 10,000 students including both men and women, leading to Graduate/Post graduate and Doctoral studies. Five Seminaries in Korea have a student body of more than 1500 each. Theologically speaking, most Seminaries in Korea hold conservative evangelical theology. There has been an abundant supply of Christian workers. Many of the Pastors are highly qualified and gifted, yet they are so dedicated and committed servants of the Lord, at the grassroot level. Scholarship, humility and devotion go hand in hand with their life-style and vocation. There is a spirit of competitiveness among the Pastors of different Churches. It is generally accepted that the Scholarship and spiritual quality of ministers are very important factors for Church growth. It is indeed wonderful to know that there are over 500 scholars with Ph.D. and D.Th. degrees in addition to over 6000 ministers holding a Masters of Theology degrees from Europe or the United States of America.

viii) A Homogeneous People

The Korean people are homogeneous people and have a rich culture, a common language, history and customs and the experience of being a persecuted people. A sense of suffering fosters Unity and Vision.

ix) Home Visitation

One of the strong elements of the Korean Church Mission is Home Visitation. In every spring and autumn each Church conducts Home Visitation Programs, announced well in advance, so that people may prepare themselves for the pastoral visit and prayer. Pastors are always available for counselling and comforting the people who are undergoing sorrow, suffering and personal/family problems. They are well organized in this respect.

x) The Dignity of the Pastors/Elders

Korean Christians love and respect their Pastors as spiritual leaders and support them cheerfully in meeting all their needs in a dignified manner. Pastors enjoy a very special status in Korea. The Elders, Deacons and other Church office bearers enjoy great love and respect in the Church.

xi) The Korean Church is a Hymn Singing Church

Every small Church has a good choir but some of the big Churches have more than one choir group. In some cases there are 6 to 12 Choir groups. In fact, the entire congregation is a heart warming choir. Love of Music is necessary for renewal/revival. They sing Christian classical and universal renewal and revival songs and hymns regarding new life in Christ with verve and gusto. They don't consider them Western, but as universal Christian hymns. Korean Hymn writers are also composing new Hymns as an expression of their growing faith. Every Christian School, College, Hospital, University and Industry owned by Christians has a chapel, a choir/choirs and Chaplains/Pastors.

xii) Korean Women

Most Korean women are not employed and they have much more free time to invest in winning others to Christ, especially their friends, relatives/family members.

They spend much time in prayer, Bible study and worship services on Sundays and weekdays in the local Churches. They are indeed strong Pillars of the Church. Two-thirds of Korean Christians are women. They are co-workers and partners in Mission. They sing well, pray well, read their Bible, and give generously for God's work.

9. Churches in North Korea

Before 1945 two-thirds of the Christians in the country resided in North Korea. But after the Communist take over in 1945, and during the Korean War, several million North Koreans fled to the South.

At present there are two Churches in North Korea, but the underground Church still exists. The present population of North Korea is about 20 million. Christian activities are prohibited but South Korean Christians are praying hard for liberation of North Korean Christians. If the reunification of North & South Korea takes place, then North Korea will be the most important Mission field of the Church, and the numerous theological graduates are ready to go as missionaries. Great spiritual preparation is going on for a spiritual break-through in North Korea.

10. Developing Asian Leadership/Asian Theology

The Korean Church is fast becoming a model for the Asian Churches is the way in which it has trained its own leaders. It is giving the Churches in Asia the confidence that they too can do the same. It is time that Christian leaders in Korea, Japan, China, India and some other

major nations cooperate and develop a strategy to equip each other. The authentic voice of the Church has to be heard, perhaps not always via NCC,CCA or WCC but often times through other new emerging popular evangelical and Para-Church agencies.

The so called 'Minjun Theology' as has been advocated by liberal camps in Korea, has not been able to make much impact on Korean Christians. All such theologians are only fringe leaders without much impact on the Korean Christians, in general.

It was reported that the Roman Catholic and the anglican Churches are not growing like the Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Methodist and other independent Churches, as they tend to maintain a stereotyped Ministry, without much experience of the movement of the Holy Spirit.

In certain Neo-Evangelical Camps 'Mission' has been defined as Cultural-Nationalism. This camp stresses that without effort to de-westernize Mission, the future of Christian Mission is hopeless.

To the traditional conservative Camp in Korea, Mission is mainly understood as a 'Soul-winning conquest' with little interest in Social, Cultural, Economic and other dimensions of Society. Asia has many complex Societies. It is urgent that the Korean Church develop a Biblical and realistic theology of Mission today, which will deal with the social/political and cultural complexities of tomorrow.

11. Full Gospel Central Church: Pastor Revd. Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho.

This is the largest Church in the world having a membership of 600,000 with a total number of 400 Pastors with a well organized network of Pastoral care and Christians nurture for Mission. The founding Pastor of this Church is the Revd. Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho, 57 years old, a convert from Buddhism, who was miraculously healed from Tuberculosis by prayers and the gift of the Holy Spirit. He was ordained as Pastor in 1961. He is a spirit filled person, loved and respected in Korea and all over the Christian World Community. His Church has built the biggest Church building in the world with a seating capacity of 50,000 people at one time. They normally hold seven worship services on Sundays and every service is packed to full capacity. They also have pre-dawn prayer meetings in the Church at 5 am with a few thousand people every day. On all Wednesday/Fridays like all other Churches, they too have mid-day/ evening services, besides all night prayer and fasting. The gift of the Spirit and healing the sick is an important aspect of the Ministry of this Church. Pastor Paul Yonggi Cho has become a legend in his own lifetime.

12. Some Negative Sides of The Korean Church

a) Schismatic Division in the Church

The division among Christians has often caused the loss of Christian testimony in the Society.

b) Lack of Social Concern

Evangelical Churches need to pay more attention to various needs of the Society, especially social justice concerns and questions. Urban Industrial Mission has very little hold in general.

c) Competitive Individualism

Competitive individualism has been the most crucial factor in the Korean Churches' involvement in Mission. There is a spirit of competitive heroism among Pastors/Church leaders. This is not a healthy state of affairs.

d) The Korean Church indulges in self-righteousness. They need to correct their understanding of faith and theology for a balanced Christian life in a growing industrialized and westernized Korean Society.

e) They have to be more careful about the newage youth.

f) They are very generous to overseas partners. It is time that they give due attention to the financial accountability of their colleagues working in different countries in Asia.

13. Socio-Cultural Background of Korean Church Growth

i) Shamanism—Shamanism is the primitive religion which forms the basis and strong undercurrent of Korean culture and the spiritual life of the Koreans. Shamanism is a primitive animistic faith in spirits, sorcerers and superstitions. It is an amoral, this worldly, blessing-oriented religion without any well formulated doctrine or religious institution. Believers can be easily assimilated to other faiths while shamanizing at the same time.

ii) Disappointment with traditional culture and tradition-especially of Confucianism had been the official philosophy for the last 500 years.

iii) Christians participated in the struggle for National Independence. Korea is one of the few colonies which has not been occupied by a Christian colonial power. The Japanese colonial government was hostile to Christians and persecuted them cruelly. Many nationalists joined the Church which provided them necessary love, care and help for national

independence struggle. As such, the Church was the stronghold of freedom fighters. Hence, people have accepted Christianity as a religion for Koreans and not of the colonialists. The Korean Church had produced many martyrs, relative to her short history.

iv) Rapid industrialization and urbanization since the 60s have uprooted many people from their family life and made them feel homeless and confused. Korean Churches have in a timely manner, opened doors and arms to take them in and provided them love and fellowship, so that, they find another home in the faith. This is one of the reasons why Churches in the cities grow much faster than those in the rural areas. The rapid industrial and urban growth is fascinating. Korea is becoming a prosperous country.

v) The Christians are in the upper sector. There are more Christians in the upper educated class of Society than in the lower and uneducated class and this has made the Christian faith attractive to many ambitious Koreans. The early Christian missionaries made a very significant contribution in the field of education. The present literacy rate is about 94%. Christian education has indeed contributed to the rapid enlightenment of Korea.

vi) Division of the Nation

The forced division of the Peninsula after the end of the Japanese occupation and persecution of the Christians in Communist North Korea has purified believers in the North and, during Korean War, many of them fled to the South. This has strengthened the Church in South Korea.

vii) Culture

a) Chinese influence for centuries before 1910.

b) Japanese influence from 1910 - 1945.

c) American influence since 1945.

Religious background—

a) Buddhism—It arrived in Korea about 300 AD and became the State religion. During the period 1891-1910 the Yi Dynasty adopted Confucianism and weakened the power of Buddhism.

b) Confucianism—Its high ethical system has deeply influenced the Korean culture more as a philosophy than as a religion. Its doctrine of filial piety and ancestor worship is well-known.

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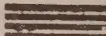
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